



South African Communist Party, 2 June 2013 (parts)

SACP Central Committee Media Statement

The SACP Central Committee met in Johannesburg over the weekend 31st May – 2 June, 2013. The secretariat political report focused on the challenges confronting the trade union movement and the National Development Plan. There were also presentations and discussion on agrarian transformation and rural development; a presentation from the inter-departmental team on the development of an integrated urban development framework; resolutions on taking forward the financial sector campaign; and a presentation made by the leadership of the ANC elections team on the broad strategic campaigning approach to the 2014 elections.

Hands off COSATU

The persisting global capitalist crisis, slowing growth, slackening demand for our commodity exports and falling profits have inevitably produced an intensified offensive against organised labour in our country. The internal challenges within COSATU need to be set against these external factors. The capitalist offensive has been particularly focused on the mining sector and on the National Union of Mineworkers – the largest affiliate of COSATU. In the platinum sector specifically, the mining houses brazenly undermined collective bargaining agreements and opened the way to vigilante unionism. The demagogic and coercive mobilisation by these vigilante forces has, in turn, exposed tens of thousands of workers to mass retrenchments – exactly the downsizing pretext the bosses have been seeking to provoke. The vigilante killing of mineworkers, including many NUM members and shopstewards continues. Senior members of the CC were not able to attend the final day of the CC because, as NUM leaders, they were burying another NUM shopsteward, another martyr.

We urge government to be more proactive in dealing with this situation. It has to consistently defend the collective bargaining system and the legislation that underpins it. The daily security of communities in the informal settlements around the mines, and the failure to provide effective housing has also been a seed-bed for vigilante networks.

It is against this background that the SACP calls for unity and the closing of ranks within COSATU itself. The flouting of one of the core founding principles of the federation, namely one industry one union; the poaching of members; the cultivation of personality cults; the undermining of collective leadership and of working class democracy, are all practices that play into the hands of the class offensive against the working class. These practices must be unambiguously condemned and eliminated.

The SACP noted with concern reports this past week that COSATU's investment arm Kopano Ke Matla has been stripped by the Financial Services Board of its licence to manage pension funds for workers. We call on COSATU and its affiliates to reclaim transparent worker control over the billions of rands of worker retirement funds and over the various union investment arms – many of which have been outsourced to big capital and effectively privatised.

The SACP reaffirms its commitment to non-interference in the internal affairs of the federation. COSATU leaders who happen to be members of the SACP do not conduct themselves within COSATU on the basis of an SACP mandate, nor are the details of internal COSATU matters discussed within Party forums. We reaffirm all of this in the context of a sustained campaign to portray the Party as a disruptive force fanning factionalism within COSATU – it is a campaign led by those who are themselves precisely involved in daily and brazen factional support for one or another personality or grouping within the federation. The SACP says: Hands off COSATU! The SACP says respect the collective leadership of the federation and its affiliates.

The SACP reaffirms the critical importance of trade union independence, we need a militant, and robust trade union movement – not a conveyor belt for Alliance partners, or for the ANC-led government. Militant union independence, however, should not be confused with a liberal notion of sustained anti-governmental opposition. Our objective as socialist formations must be to collectively build and assert working class power in all sites of power, and not limit our strategic objectives to simply being watch-dogs, “civil society” voices supposedly “speaking truth to power”.

The National Development Plan

The CC engaged with the SACP discussion document “Let’s not monumentalise the NDP”. The CC expressed its full support for the general analysis and specific proposals advanced in the document. We must not allow the NDP to become a political football that divides the Alliance and unites opposition forces who selectively quote from the 484-page plan. The NDP is an uneven document and the CC welcomed the recent admission from planning commissioners that it is not written in stone, and that it is “not perfect”, nor even, according to commissioner Bobby Godsell, a plan.

A key challenge with the document is that it veers between being a very generalised and unobjectionable “vision”, to specific long-range targets (some of which appear to be unrealistic, others are exceedingly unambitious), to an actual plan – with some chapters going into great and untested detail. There have also been claims that it is fit-for-implementation, an off-the-shelf plan of action in its entirety and at the same time a platform for a grand society-wide social accord.

Chapter 3 on the economy and employment is particularly weak, calling (correctly) for a major upscaling of savings and investment in our economy (from 16% of GDP to over 30% by 2030) – but without critically examining the post-1994 capital liberalisation and macro-economic measures that underpinned the precipitous drop of fixed investment from pre-1994 levels that had often reached 30% and more. It is a macro-economic policy package that has also exposed us to wild, speculatively driven fluctuations in the value of the Rand – as we have once more been reminded this past week. This failure to evaluate macro-economic policies and the powerful (and unpatriotic) financial capital interests that underpin them represents a grave flaw within the heart of the plan. Other parts of the NDP including chapters on transforming human settlements, building a capable developmental state, dealing with corruption, support for the NHI, amongst other things, provide useful proposals and perspectives that need to be defended and consolidated. These important positive areas also serve as a useful antidote to the hypocritical claims of the DA that its policies and those of the NDP in its entirety are identical.

The CC agreed that the next step needs to be the institutionalisation of an organic state planning commission and the alignment of the vast array of plans and planning responsibilities already within the state. At the same time, there is no reason why some version of the current national planning commission could not be retained as an ADVISORY body.

The SACP believes that it would be misguided to seek to build Alliance unity on the NDP in its current form. Instead, we should rather seek to build unity in action

around the ANC's key resolution on the need for a more radical second phase of the transition. Greater content needs to be provided to what is actually meant by such a phase, and any useful proposals within the NDP can, certainly, form part of such a strategic platform.

The ANC-alliance 2014 election campaign

The CC pledged its full support to the ANC-led election campaign. The SACP will, as in the past, actively contribute to the content of the campaign itself, underlining the importance of connecting campaigns around the social and economic struggles of the working and poor with the election campaign itself. The SACP will also contribute actively to the development of the election manifesto, and to ensuring maximum Alliance unity as the mainstay for an overwhelming ANC election victory.

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Contact:

Malesela Maleka
SACP Spokesperson

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